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**ACCOMPLISHING STRATEGIC ACTIONS OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR
MARITIME SECURITY THROUGH SEA BASING**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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23 October 2006

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ABSTRACT

Accomplishing Strategic Actions of the National Strategy for Maritime Security through Sea Basing

Enhancing international cooperation, maximizing domain awareness, embedding security into commercial practices, deploying layered security and assuring continuity of the marine transportation systems are the five strategic actions of the National Strategy for Maritime Strategy (NSMS). The Joint Integrating Concept of Sea Basing is one method the Navy can use to address these actions and shape our maritime community in both the public and private sectors. Sea Basing brings multi-mission platforms that are capable of staging joint/combined forces throughout the Joint Operations Area (JOA). This paper discusses the critical nature of leveraging Sea Basing capabilities with our Coalition partners and both the public and private sectors of our Nation. Finally, this paper discusses various challenges (e.g. interoperability, command and control, and legal) that exist within this concept when supporting the strategic actions. Sea Basing not only brings complex capabilities to the JOA, but is the foundation for sustaining Joint/Combined forces in order to support the five NSMS strategic actions.

ACCOMPLISHING STRATEGIC ACTIONS OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR MARITIME SECURITY THROUGH SEA BASING

*The art of war is, in the last result, the art of keeping one's freedom of action
- Xenophon, Greek historian (c. 430-355 BC)*

1. Introduction

How important is Sea Basing? In August 2005, Admiral M. Mullen set his three strategic priorities: 1. sustaining readiness, 2. building a Navy for the future, and 3. building a 21st Century workforce.¹ This paper will focus on “building a Navy for the Future” in Sea Basing where “the view of the future Navy should be based on an improved force-structure mix that better supports the GWOT (Global War on Terrorism), enables necessary shaping and stability operations, preserves our ability to prevail in major combat operations, and sustains our transformation efforts relative to the Sea Basing concept.”² What is Sea Basing? Sea Basing is defined as “the rapid deployment, assembly, command, projection, reconstitution, and re-employment of joint combat power from the sea, while providing continuous support, sustainment, and force protection to select expeditionary joint forces without reliance on land bases within the Joint Operations Area.”³ The importance of this single concept is vividly seen in its definition. Simply stated the United States and our international partners will be able to place combat power anywhere in the world and maintain that power for a long period of time through Sea Basing. For this reason, Sea Basing should be incorporated into the new Naval Strategy and is a means to support the strategic actions of the National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS).

2. History

A seabase is not just a ship, not just prepositioned material, not just helicopter assault – it represents a complex capability. One must think of a seabase as a hybrid system of systems consisting of concepts of operations, ships, forces,

offensive and defensive weapons, aircraft, communications and logistics, all of which involve careful planning, coordination and exercising to operate smoothly.

***Defense Sea Basing Board
Task Force on Sea Basing, Aug 2003***

We, the Navy...the military, are at a critical time in history and it is important that our focus for the future is clear. Clouding this focus will only slow the synergies that we have gained in war fighting, partnerships, training and personnel management throughout our history. The Navy's new Maritime Strategy will guide us as it interrelates and harmonizes our ends and means through both art and science.⁴ When developing our Service strategy, the Service Chief, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), must seek guidance from higher authority in order to continue meeting the Nations goals and objectives. The challenge for the CNO, ADM M. Mullen, is to develop a strategy that encompasses the full spectrum of the Navy's operating environment from both a joint and coalition perspective. ADM Mullen is not restricting any of the contributors. He has welcomed ideas from all personnel and is prepared for his staff to review all submissions.⁵ This approach is different from the Service strategies of the past and should prove beneficial by maximizing efficiencies in both the academic, political, and military arenas.

America's overarching strategic security document is the 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS) signed by the President of the United States. This provides the direction the Nation will take on matters of National Security. This document creates the basic foundation for the development of other security strategies.

In December 2004, the President directed both the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security to lead the efforts in developing a National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS).⁶ In September 2005, the NSMS was signed and provides

guidance to both the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The NSMS will be used as the primary document for reference, but other strategies from the DOD and the Joint Staff will also be utilized. NSMS outlined three broad principles to provide the necessary guidance to develop appropriate objectives. These guiding principles are:

1. Preserve the freedom of the seas,
2. Facilitate and defend commerce to ensure an uninterrupted flow of shipping,
3. Facilitate the movement of desirable goods and people across our borders, while screening out dangerous people and material.⁷

With these three fundamental principles intact, the NSMS established eight supporting plans, four objectives (described below), and five strategic actions (described below) to maintain the security of our maritime accesses along with those of our international partners. The focus of this paper will be to show how the concept of Sea Basing can best be incorporated into the New Maritime Strategy in order to accomplish the five strategic actions in the NSMS.

An understanding of the supporting plans is not required to know how Sea Basing supports the strategic actions of NSMS, but a comprehension of both the objectives and actions of NSMS is. Another important underlying fact is that Sea Basing is the underpinning for both Sea Shield and Sea Strike. Neither the Sea Shield nor the Sea Strike concepts will be discussed in detail in this paper, but elements of each will be used to show the importance of Sea Basing because similar assets are required to support both Sea Shield and Sea Strike.

3. National Strategy for Maritime Security Objectives

There is at least one thing worse than fighting with allies – And that is to fight without them.

- Sir Winston S. Churchill

Within the NSMS, four objectives are highlighted to be the cornerstone of this key maritime document. These objectives shape the future of the maritime security document and a brief description of each objective will assist in understanding the strategic actions discussed later in the paper. These objectives are:

1. Detect, deter, interdict, and defeat terrorist attacks, criminal acts, or hostile acts in the maritime domain, and prevent its unlawful exploitation for those purposes. Achieving this objective will prevent potential adversaries from attacking the maritime domain or committing unlawful acts in the maritime environment by monitoring and patrolling our maritime borders, maritime approaches, and exclusive economic zones, as well as high seas areas of national interests, and by stopping such activities at any stage of development or deployment.
2. Protect maritime-related population centers, critical infrastructure, key resources, transportation systems, borders, harbors, ports, and coastal approaches in the maritime domain. Protection of critical infrastructure and key resources is a shared responsibility of the public and private sectors. Our forces at-sea presence should reassure U.S. citizens, deter adversaries and lawbreakers, provide better mobile surveillance coverage, add to warning time, allow us to seize the initiative in order to influence events at a distance, and facilitate the capability to surprise and engage adversaries well before they can cause harm to the United States or our coalition partners.
3. Minimize damage and expedite recovery from attacks within the maritime domain. A terrorist attack or similarly disruptive Incident of National Significance involving the marine transportation system can cause a severe ripple effect on other modes of transportation, as well as have adverse economic or national security effects. Recovery of critical infrastructure, resumption of the marine transportation system, and restoration of communities within the affected area must all occur simultaneously and expeditiously.
4. Safeguard the ocean and its resources from unlawful exploitation and intentional critical damage. The United States and other nations have a substantial economic and security interest in preserving the health and productive capacity of the oceans. We will continue to project a presence by monitoring and patrolling the United States' exclusive economic zones and certain high seas areas of national interest. Assisting

regional partners to maintain the maritime sovereignty of their territorial seas and internal waters is a longstanding objective of the United States and contributes directly to the partners' economic development as well as their ability to combat unlawful or hostile exploitation by a variety of threats.⁸

4. National Strategy for Maritime Security Strategic Actions

The strategic actions of the NSMS support the four objectives above and drive both the DOD and DHS to meeting the end state of this strategy. Maritime forces have a role to play in these actions. The role of the maritime forces is seen within each of the actions and in order to assist in an understanding of how Sea Basing supports these actions, each of them are described below:

1. Enhance international cooperation to ensure lawful and timely enforcement actions against maritime threats. This strategic action is designed to involve all nations that have an interest in maritime security, as well as the ability and willingness to take steps to defeat terrorism and maritime crime.
2. Maximize domain awareness to support effective decision-making. Awareness and threat knowledge are critical for securing the maritime domain and the key to preventing adverse events. Domain awareness enables the early identification of potential threats and enhances appropriate responses, including interdiction at an optimal distance with capable prevention forces.
3. Embed security into commercial practices to reduce vulnerabilities and facilitate commerce. This strategy will eliminate security weaknesses by incorporating best practices and establishing centers of excellence, including feedback loops for lessons learned, as well as periodic review of each country's security standards for mutual compatibility.
4. Deploy layered security to unify public and private security measures. A layered approach to maritime security means applying some measure of security to each of the following points of vulnerability: transportation, staff, passengers, conveyances, access control, cargo and baggage, ports, and security *en route*.
5. Assure continuity of the marine transportation system to maintain vital commerce and defense readiness. This action will ensure the United States is prepared to maintain vital commerce and defense readiness in the aftermath of any terrorist attack or similarly disruptive incident that occurs within the maritime domain.⁹

No one of these actions alone can support the full realm of maritime security, but rather they are enablers for each other, much like Sea Basing is an enabler for the full range of military operations.

5. Sea Basing Accomplishing Strategic Actions

5.1 Enhancing international cooperation

Sea Basing enhances international cooperation and ensures lawful and timely enforcement actions against maritime threats. With U.S. forward deployed forces, through either our units home-ported overseas, a Carrier Strike Group (CSG) or Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG), initial Sea Basing operations can effectively deny, deter or destroy maritime threats to private/public assets or sea ports. These Strike Groups are adept at operational fires and operational command and control, which are key operational elements of Sea Basing. Strike Groups bring a large kinetic force to the operating domain. Applying the kinetic force of these Strike Groups is not necessarily the method of resolution the Combatant Commander (CCDR) or functional Component Commanders (CFMCC/CFACC/CFLCC/JFMCC/JFACC/JFLCC) desire to use due to political sensitivities and requirements not to escalate a given situation.

Since such constraints exist in today's environment, the kinetic operations of Sea Basing are not the operations a Commander will use to enhance cooperation. A Commander must use other means to achieve this action. With the multi-mission capabilities and ability to stage joint/combined forces aboard Sea Basing platforms, a Commander can task our personnel to conduct maritime training on tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) for maritime defense, a key role for the United States in maintaining maritime security, which is both explicitly and implicitly stated in the NSMS objectives.

One example of Sea Basing success while enhancing international cooperation is shown with our most basic concept of Sea Basing...Afloat Forward Staging Base operations. Successes in the recent past with Afloat Forward Staging Base (AFSB) operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG) with the training conducted for the Iraqi Navy (IqN) and Iraqi Marines (IqM) pave the way for international cooperation. Today, the IqN and IqM are adequately trained to defend not only their oil platforms, but also other vessels in and around their waters from terrorist attacks and piracy. While the units assigned as the AFSB enhanced cooperation and training opportunities, the AFSB operations also provided the Navy with an afloat sea port of debarkation (SPOD) for moving supplies, material, and personnel, while supporting maintenance requirements of Iraqi and U.S. ships and patrol craft.

5.2 Maximizing domain awareness

Sea Basing maximizes domain awareness to support effective decision-making. Due to the inherent nature of the assigned assets (ships and aircraft) in Sea Basing, understanding the operational environment with which they are operating is a constant process. Mere understanding of the immediate area is not enough with the nature of complex threats that we face today. We must ensure supremacy in all areas of the domain – sea, air, land, space and cyber. Our assets have the capability to provide the Joint or Combined Force Commander (JFC/CFC) with information overflow, but by leveraging technology and de-centralized decision-making, the ability for these commanders to make quick and accurate decisions is significantly increased.

Achieving domain awareness is a challenge in the maritime environment due to the size of the oceans and seas. It demands an integrated network and coalition of assets to maintain

the level of awareness to defend U.S. ports, maritime accesses and those of our partners. This level of awareness is what Sea Basing brings to support this critical action; it is an enabler for global connectivity. To comprehensively maintain awareness in this operating environment, the communication and sensor packages that are inherent to our platforms are the force enablers of Sea Basing providing the JFC/CFC the ability to move forces throughout the joint operating area (JOA) and maintain complete domain awareness.

Contributions required to achieve the fidelity of this complex information sharing are not only from America's assets, but those of our coalition partners, the commercial networks, and public/private organizations. The vision of the 1000-ship Navy, which encompasses not only military assets, but also those of the commercial shippers, commercial insurers and other government agencies, ensures the maritime environment is monitored and reported through extended range communications via the entire frequency spectrum and enhances information sharing.

Sea Basing provides an extended and flexible base of operations, the horizons for detecting, monitoring, and reporting vessels on the high seas is extended beyond the JOA. With complete domain awareness, no longer shall the open-ocean be an easy road to navigate for those individuals/organizations intent on injecting chaos into this world.

5.3 Embedding security into commercial practices

Embedding security into commercial practices to reduce vulnerabilities and facilitate commerce is not specific to Sea Basing, but is within the full realm of our Joint Forces, specifically the Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard. Sharing of information is critical for this strategic action to be successful. Expanding our lessons learned databases and standard operating procedures to those organizations of the public and private sector for the

advancement of maintaining maritime security will greatly assist in our unity of effort.

Rapid sharing of information through globally connected networks will ensure that procedures can be modified and implemented in an efficient and expeditious manner.

Sea Basing assets, while on station, will be able to test these practices with our maritime security, both public and private, through exercises. Basic exercises with respect to port security, container breeches, etc. will allow interagency organizations, state and local governments the opportunity to integrate into a higher military headquarters (JFC/JFMCC/Maritime Headquarters [MHQ]) onboard a sea based platform, which would assist in future operations should a disaster/attack occur. This interaction and exercise involvement may minimize the hard-spots seen during previous crises with initial interaction and maintaining a unity of effort.

5.4 Deploying layered security

Sea Basing supports a layered security to unify public and private security measures. As previously mentioned, a layered approach to maritime security means to apply some measure of security to each of the following points of vulnerability: transportation, staff, passengers, conveyances, access control, cargo and baggage, ports, and security *en route*. Defense of these vulnerability points will require concerted efforts by all parties concerned. Due to the sheer nature of the assets involved with Sea Basing, the layered defense or “defense-in-depth” concept is applicable.

Projecting power and dominating the maritime domain are functions of the Navy. One means to achieve these functions is through communications and adaptability. The Navy’s connectivity through data links and communications enable it to project its forces forward to ensure the safety of personnel, equipment and accesses. Utilizing Sea Basing as a foundation

for a layered defense enables a Commander to use both intra-theater and inter-theater lift assets to bring specialized forces to the arena in a short period of time and deploy them immediately to conduct interception operations or defense of port accesses, for example. Again, by exploiting the extended networks of Sea Basing, the JFC can re-arm, re-direct, or stage forces appropriately and in minimum time to keep the threat at distance from critical ports and cities.

To increase the defensive layers of a defended position, Sea Basing enables the Commander to maneuver forces into increased tactical positions to support other Commanders of these critical maritime nodes. These added layers will not only increase the kinetic lethality of the defensive forces, but also enable the decision-makers at these nodes to start their integrated and practiced response procedures early, knowing that the Commander is being supported by another agile force. These early decisions allow Commanders to shift from defensive operations to offensive operations, but also will “buy” time for public officials to isolate the area, move personnel or increase response assets based on threat and minimize the damage to the area.

5.5 Assure continuity of the marine transportations system

Sea Basing assures continuity of the marine transportation system to maintain vital commerce and defense readiness. This action will ensure the United States is prepared to maintain vital commerce and defense readiness in the aftermath of any terrorist attack or similarly disruptive incident that occurs within the maritime domain. Using the seas/oceans as maneuver space, Sea Basing is able to provide a quick, ready response to terrorist or disruptive incidents. The ability to provide the full spectrum of support to tragic incidents

such as terrorist attacks, weapons of mass destruction detonation/launch, pandemic disease or natural diseases is inherent to Sea Basing.

Sea Basing provides sustainable forces to support ongoing efforts after a disaster/incident through the use of open sea ports of debarkation, air ports of debarkation, inter-theater lift capabilities, both by sea and air, and medical capabilities. “Reaching back” to those open ports enable the Commanders to channel supplies, materials and personnel appropriately and also allow the re-direction of assets to support other potential areas of attack accordingly. With extensive communications networks, assets of the Sea Basing concept are able to establish command and control points with government organizations (Federal, State, and Local levels) and non-government organizations. Sea Basing also enables the command and control organization to be removed from the incident and provide the required tactical decision making in challenging times.

Inherent to Sea Basing concept is a ready response force which is already aboard the sea based platforms and is able to assist in the security/defense of the area, when required/authorized. Again, the kinetic solution may not be the best response in these situations, but the ability to project power when needed, either through troops or armament, is an option and deterrent for further immediate attacks.

6. Challenges and Potential Solutions

Sea Basing supports the strategic actions of the NSMS, but due to its sheer complexity, many challenges appear. Identifying every challenge possible is beyond the scope of this paper; however, the following are some examples of the challenges and possible solutions:

1. Challenge: Interoperability

- a. Discussion: Systems that are being designed for Sea Basing platforms are done with a Joint-support (common Services functionality or “plug-n-play” systems) mind-set. This mind-set is inadequate for the demands in today’s environment. Our ability to sustain forces in the JOA depends upon our ability to also sustain our Coalition and commercial partners. Similar systems are available through key allies, but our ability to communicate and operate in a hostile environment relies on all of our partners.

Recommendation: Continue to build partnerships in designing systems. The ability to sustain all forces that are partnered in our mission is critical and is a vital force enabler. Our partners must be able to connect and be re-supplied at-sea alongside our Sea Basing platforms to assist in a secure maritime environment.

2. Challenge: Communications Networks

- a. Discussion: When operating in an expansive environment such as the oceans/seas of the world, an intact communications network is essential to free-flow of information in an expeditious manner. Without a common communications network, the ability to quickly prevent terrorist attacks or intercept a vessel expeditiously is reduced. These communication networks must be secure and have redundant systems.

Recommendation: Common communication networks within the military continue to develop. One example is CENTRIXS. However, to support all the strategic actions, these communications networks must cross-over to the public and private companies in order to ensure a unity of effort is maintained.

Establish secure communication paths to specific government agencies within our sea ports and to those vetted agencies in maritime areas of national interests.

3. Challenge: Weather/Sea State

- a. Discussion: With any operation at sea, the climate is a significant factor in planning. To conduct the intra-theater movements for re-supply and personnel transfer during sea state 3 or higher is difficult and when conducted is slow. Rigid systems (hard-mounted to decks) are directly impacted by weather. The rolling and pitching of vessels at sea during these types of conditions varies from platform to platform, but can be at the upper limits of safety envelopes which would prevent the transfers. Systems (cranes, transfer stations, barges, vessels, aircraft landing systems) which can compensate for these types of weather situations are required.

Recommendation: Ensuring equipment can compensate for these weather conditions can minimize delays in transferring personnel, equipment and supplies. Cost-benefit analysis must be conducted as should the feasibility of these types of systems. Another avenue of minimizing delays in transfers due to weather, sea state specifically is to put the transfer vessels to sea as the situation may improve the further away from the shoreline the sea base is.

4. Challenge: Command and Control

- a. Discussion: This operational factor is required for success of any operation. It is vital to the success of achieving the objectives in the NSMS; however, it is also one of the most difficult aspects for our strategic actions. As a

military, unity of command is engrained in our forces. When other agencies and organizations, government and non-government, are required to be integrated into the operation, this concept may not be in place or clear. When things go wrong, it is important to have unity of command with a supporting force behind him/her in order to minimize conflicting actions.

Recommendation: Continue to improve communications within other government and non-government organizations. Interact with private and public organizations in order to establish exercises for both specific and general crises. Establish seminars to obtain agreements on understanding unity of command, while also providing the risk analysis for others to see and debate. Establish standard operating procedures along the lines of the National Response Plan (NRP) and then practice them with all parties through a series of exercises. These exercises can include real assets on location, in a simulated environment, or organizing key decision makers in a room and conducting a tabletop drill.

- b. Discussion: Establishing a staff headquarters/command center onboard one of the sea based platforms must be thoughtfully planned. This staff must be able to move with the platform in order to fully maximize the potential of the Sea Basing concepts. The issue may present itself if an event occurs either within or outside of the JOA, where Sea Basing assets must move in order to support the operation. There must be a seamless transition with minimal impact on command and control.

Recommendation: Establishing the “owner” of the sea based asset is key in this situation. Through the knowledge of which Combatant Commander has operational command and operational control of the asset should alleviate these issues. Staffs, as they do now, will still be required to coordinate efforts. With a staff embarked on assets that are maneuverable and potentially required to support other Joint/Coalition/Commercial/Government assets, placing a staff onboard must be weighed carefully against the risks involved. The command center must also be able to support other agencies establishing a headquarters onboard.

5. Challenge: Intelligence sharing

- a. Discussion: Successful operations in disrupting plots to conduct maritime attacks relied heavily on intelligence and intelligence sharing among our allies. With only five percent of the millions of containers entering United States ports being physically checked, intelligence sharing among our interagency organizations, other nation’s government, and vetted public/private organizations when practical is critical to prevent an incident.

Recommendation: Continue to push for intelligence sharing and intelligence sharing systems to cross-borders and agencies within the United States and outside of it.

6. Challenge: Integration

- a. Discussion: Integration of assets into the joint environment is getting better among all services through earlier education in the importance of joint operations. However, NSMS calls for interagency integration and most

services fail here. As stated above, increasing communication with other interagency organizations will ease integration, but it is only one part of the solution.

Recommendation: Conduct annual exercises which fully integrate Federal, State and local governments along with the commercial organizations in the ports to force the integration. Conduct talks to discuss and establish standard operating procedures along with sharing best practices in security to place everyone on a common operating environment.

7. Challenge: Law

- a. Discussion: Homeland Defense is a military function and clearly lies within Title 10 requirements; However Homeland Security is a law enforcement responsibility, which requires specific actions for the military to be used in support of these missions.

Recommendation: Review changes to law that will enable Navy Commander's to transition easily from one mission to another without a law enforcement officer or USCG official aboard.

7. Conclusion

Sea Basing continues to be a complex and difficult issue to tackle. However, with the requirements set forth in the NSMS objectives and adapting our ability to fulfill the strategic actions contained within the NSMS, Sea Basing is the foundation for sustaining a Joint/Combined force to meet the objectives. Flexibility, maneuverability, lethality, access, and speed are all trademarks of Sea Basing, which makes the concept a force enabler for the NSMS.

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